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Trade, Commerce, and Commercial Crises

Commerce and Industry. By J. RUSSELL SMITH. (New York: Henry Holt and Company. 1916. Pp. vi, 596. \$1.40.)

The general appearance of this little book, together with its profuse illustrations, graphs, and diagrams, leads to the conclusion that it is intended for use in the vocational courses established in recent years by many high schools. Certainly it is too elementary for the college student or the general reader. Even for school boys the usefulness of a book may be doubted that compresses into so small a space a survey of the commerce and industry of the whole world. "I have had to tell fewer facts," says the author, "in order to leave space for the explanations. This makes less to remember, and more to understand." It is questionable, however, whether a very condensed explanation is any less tax on the memory than the fact it relates to, and whether the understanding grasps one more easily than the other.

It appears to the reviewer that the criticism here suggested applies to many of the vocational courses and the books called out by them, which seem to be growing popular. The effort to provide a short road to knowledge so that school boys, and sometimes also college students, may be prepared in brief time for some special work leads to two evils. One is the omission of many things essential to thorough education; the other is a superficial and smattering training in the things that are retained. It may be said that even superficial knowledge is better than none at all. And this may be true; the fault lies in calling such knowledge an education, and in diverting the energies of pupils from more fundamental studies by the unfulfilled promise of a special training.

A few examples, taken at random from the present book, will illustrate the danger of too great condensation. On the first page we are startled to find that our meat and milk come from animals that eat each other as well as from those that eat plants! A few pages farther on we are told that primitive or savage peoples are such because of the stinginess of nature's gifts to the land where they live, and not because of bad qualities they inherently possess. Would the author then attribute the condition of the Maoris and the American Indians, when discovered, to the climate or sterility of New Zealand and North America? If "it is a common mistake of historians to say that peoples have certain qualities inherently," is it not equally misleading to give the unqualified implication that physical environment alone "in making the race has given the

qualities"? On page 33 a mistaken cause is suggested for the diminished importance of the California wheat crop. On page 223 a wrong explanation is given of the real difference between "woolen" and "worsted" goods. On the next page occurs the misleading statement that the use of cotton in the woolen mills indicates "the diminished importance of wool"!

The volume contains many interesting facts and some useful explanatory matter, but it is inadequate as a textbook. Perhaps its chief value would be for occasional quick reference, because of its thorough index.

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The British Coal Trade. By H. STANLEY JEVONS. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Company, Ltd.; New York: E. P. Dutton and Company. 1915. Pp. xii, 876.)

In 1863 W. S. Jevons wrote his book on *The Coal Question*. Some fifty years later, his son, H. S. Jevons, has taken up this same subject in the present work entitled *The British Coal Trade*. The thesis of the father was that England's remarkable industrial development in the nineteenth century was in large measure the result of her abundant supplies of cheaply obtainable coal, and that the industries of Great Britain in a few generations would suffer real injury because of the scarcity of such coal. It was not complete exhaustion of Great Britain's coal that was feared, but rather the using up of the best deposits, which would eventually result in placing the industries of Great Britain at a disadvantage as compared with the industries of growing countries, such as the United States, for example. The son, with the aid of more recent statistics, also develops this same idea, and expresses the opinion that Englishmen, in the future, in carrying on commercial competition with other nations, must rely less upon exploiting the country's store of natural wealth, and more upon the advantages secured through the application of scientific skill and practical education.

The main interest of the son, however, is in the human side of the industry. He presents at considerable length a very sympathetic account of the miner's life and work, and of his trade union and political activities. Trade unionism, we are told, is very strong among the miners. The Miners' Federation of Great Britain, consisting of fifteen unions and two federations, has 670,-